

Rough Bank Reserve

A haven for butterflies, moths and wildlife

About Butterfly Conservation

Butterfly Conservation is a national wildlife charity dedicated to saving butterflies, moths and their habitats.

We work to safeguard the future of our butterflies and moths through:

- Monitoring and research
- Creating and managing reserves for their biodiversity
- Advising on land management for the creation and conservation of their habitats
- The conservation of threatened species including their re-establishment where appropriate
- Campaigning for Government policies and legislation that protect and sustain our environment
- Raising public awareness of nature conservation and encouraging participation with it

Almost two thirds of the 59 species of butterfly found in the UK are declining or threatened, as are many of our 2500 moths.

People acting locally can help prevent this getting worse and try to reverse it to ensure there's a wonderful natural heritage for future generations.

The Gloucestershire Branch members undertake local conservation work for the county's butterflies and moths. We hope that the wildlife you see on this reserve will encourage you to support us.

You can help by joining Butterfly Conservation, giving a donation or on a more practical level you could send in butterfly records or come to one of our Reserve work parties.

Please help us look after this reserve and others by donating:

Text: RBRV01 £3 or £5 to 70070

Visit our branch website for more information:

www.gloucestershire-butterflies.org.uk



And the main website at:

www.butterfly-conservation.org



How to find the Reserve

The car park is at SO 913 087 (Satnav 51.7770, -2.1261) which is just south west of The Camp - a small hamlet on a minor road called the Calf Way connecting the B4070 at Fostons Ash pub to Bisley. Traffic can be very fast on this road so please use extra caution entering and exiting the car park.

The car park is for visitors to the reserve only. It is private land, not a public car park and vehicles can only be parked here on a permissive basis and at your own risk. It may be closed at times during the year. Please do not block the entrance gates. No camping or overnight parking is allowed.

Butterfly Conservation accepts no liability for damage to, or loss of, or from, any vehicle parked in this parking area. There are no toilet or refreshment facilities at the reserve, the nearest are in Bisley.



Butterfly Conservation

Company limited by guarantee, registered in England (2206468).
Registered Office: Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset, BH20 5QP. Charity registered in England and Wales (254937) and in Scotland (SCO39268). VAT No GB 991 2771 89.

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Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment





Habitats and Management

There are three parts to this 18 ha reserve: Rough Bank and two fields, Little Myers and Great Myers.

Rough Bank - 9.8 ha - is typical unimproved limestone grassland with an abundant herb-rich flora and associated wildlife. Its steep stony slopes, unsuitable for cultivation, have only ever been grazed and also avoided agricultural improvements. This has resulted in its very rich diversity of wildlife and its unspoilt nature. Woodland, trees and shrubs surround much of the Bank and over the years have gradually encroached onto the open grassland. Work has started to recover such areas and to carefully reduce the tree and scrub cover on these particular parts.

The two Myers fields, despite having permanently wet areas, were agriculturally improved in the past. Those effects have been fading and they are increasingly displaying more semi-natural, flowery conditions with plants reflecting the deeper soils and marshy areas. Three bunds to help prevent flooding in the Slad valley below have been created in these fields by the Stroud Rural Sustainable Drainage Scheme (RSuDS) project.

Some of the National Trust's (NT) conservation herd of Belted Galloway cattle graze this reserve throughout much of the year, though they would usually only be on the Rough Bank area during autumn and winter.

Volunteer work parties are essential for maintaining this reserve for butterflies and other wildlife. If you are interested, please see details on our websites.



Other Wildlife

The abundant scattered scrub and trees are particularly important for birds and those seen include Redstart, Spotted Flycatcher, Tree Pipit and Snipe. The frequent presence of Fallow, Muntjac and Roe deer is indicated by the shallow depressions where they lie, their browsing of shrubs and droppings. Common Lizards, Slow worm and Glow worm are all present, and Adders are likely to be, but have not yet been seen.

Butterflies and moths have been well recorded already and amazingly about 25% of the UK species have been noted here. The abundant flora is also thoroughly assessed and its diversity accounts for the site's importance for a number of nationally rare and scarce moths. But with less than 1% of the UK's less well-recorded invertebrates noted so far there must be many species waiting to be discovered.

The rare Rugged Oil Beetle, known from only a handful of sites in the Cotswolds, has been found and the large Roman Snail is readily seen but should be left alone as it's legally protected. The reserve is buzzing with insects in summer and amongst the more obvious and eye-catching are brightly-coloured *Chrysomelidae* leaf beetles, usually on yellow flowers of the daisy family.

The reserve sits at the top of a secluded valley leading down to Snows Farm (a Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust site) and Slad village, an iconic part of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



Background and Access

Butterfly Conservation purchased the reserve in 2012 from the Pritchard family with a major grant from Natural England (NE) and generous donations including from the Gloucestershire Naturalists' Society. The Bank is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for the diversity of its flora and fauna, and Open Access (OA) land.

The Myers fields are outside the SSSI and are not OA land but a bridleway runs along the track and is joined by a footpath from The Camp. There are no other designated footpaths or bridleways on the rest of the reserve. The permissive car park is wheelchair-friendly and the kissing gate from it has a RADAR lock. Ground conditions, including the track, are uneven and soft when wet. All terrain mobility scooters should cope with reaching the Bank via the wide pedestrian gates and others fitted with RADAR locks. The Bank is steep and many parts of the site can be very muddy in the wet. Stout footwear is advisable.

- Please follow the Countryside Code - close all gates and take your rubbish home.
- Open Access rights are subject to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW).
- You are welcome to picnic but NO fires, BBQs or camping.
- It is an offence to uproot any plants - don't pick the flowers.
- Horse riders & cyclists must keep to the designated bridleway.
- Vehicles other than wheelchairs and disabled buggies are not allowed on the Reserve.
- Keep your dog under close control at all times, on a lead during the bird nesting season and when livestock are on the Reserve. Please clean up after it and take away with you.
- Please close the car park gate after use.

Cotswold Commons and Beechwoods

The reserve was declared part of the Cotswold Commons and Beechwoods National Nature Reserve (NNR) when it was opened in 2014 by Andrew Sells, Chair of Natural England. NNRs represent many of the finest wildlife and geological sites in the country. The first NNRs emerged in the post-war years alongside the early National Parks, and have increased in number and extent since then.

Established in 1981, the Cotswold Commons and Beechwoods NNR is set in the classic Cotswold countryside of steep limestone scarps, wide valleys, pastures and beautiful villages. Rough Bank is one of its six grassland sites in the Painswick and Slad Valleys.

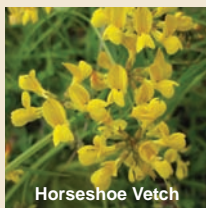
Plants

The reserve supports high quality limestone grassland - one of the most species-rich types of habitat in the British Isles. Butterfly and moth food plants abound: there is much Horseshoe Vetch, Kidney Vetch and Common Birds-foot-trefoil, for the caterpillars of Chalk Hill Blue, Small Blue and Common Blue. Others such as Cowslip, Early Purple Orchid, Common spotted-orchid, Autumn Lady's Tresses, Autumn Gentian, Devil's Bit Scabious, Woolly Thistle and the wonderfully named Corky-fruited Water-dropwort typify the floral richness. The diversity of grasses is also important, and supports many insects such as grasshoppers and crickets. The larvae of some moth species can use many plants, but others are restricted to one or a few, like some of the scarcer butterflies.

There are plenty of scabious, knapweeds, hawkbits and thistles supplying copious nectar to all insects during those long hazy days of high summer.



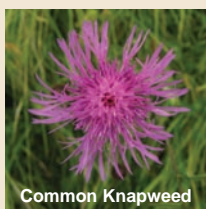
Autumn Lady's Tresses



Horseshoe Vetch



Common Bird's-foot-trefoil



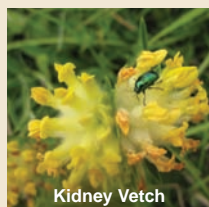
Common Knapweed



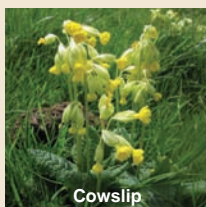
Goldenrod



Early Purple Orchid



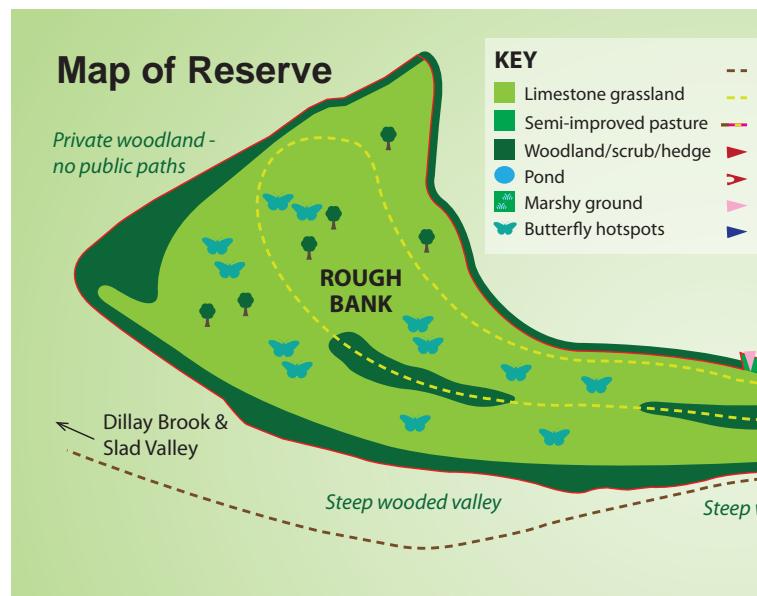
Kidney Vetch



Cowslip



Common Spotted-orchid



Dry-stone Wall

The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens, together with local contractors, built the dry-stone wall along the access way to the Bank. The gate in this wall was specially commissioned by the Richard Seager Annual Arts Award as part of Butterfly Conservation's 50th year celebrations. Designed and constructed by Tobias Forbes Gower it provides a wonderful entrance to the key part of the reserve.



Moths

Very little was known about the site's moths when BC bought the reserve, but intensive daytime recording and night-time light trapping quickly resulted in a long list of species, now well over 600.

Whilst many of these might also be found in suburban garden moth traps, it was a very pleasant surprise to find that the site has three national rarities and numerous nationally scarce species (40 since 2012).

Three of the species recorded at the reserve had not previously been found in Gloucestershire, including a resident colony of the tiny micro-moth *Trifurcula headleyella* (one of the rarities) whose larvae mine inside the leaves of Selfheal.



Six-belted Clearwing (female)



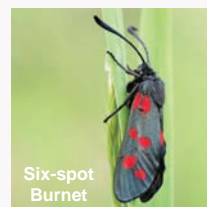
Nemophora cupriacella



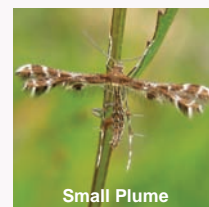
Pyrausta nigrata



Trifurcula headleyella



Six-spot Burnet



Small Plume

Pictures not to scale

